

**PITTSBURGH COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS
A G E N D A**

March 5, 2001

I. CALL TO ORDER

II. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

**III. GUEST SPEAKER - Dr. John Thompson, *Superintendent*
Pittsburgh Public Schools**

IV. COMPLIANCE UPDATE

V. STAFF AND COMMITTEE REPORTS

A. Director's Report

VI. NEW BUSINESS

VII. ANNOUNCEMENTS

PITTSBURGH COMMISSION ON HUMAN RELATIONS

Minutes of Meeting March 5, 2001

Attendance: Pamela Golden, *Chair*

Stephan Broadus	B. J. Samson	Christine Williams	Susan Hunt
Robert McClenahan	Elizabeth Pittinger	Father Lou Vallone	Curtis Smith
Frances Barnes			

Called/Unable to attend: Barbara Burstin Alma Speed Fox Sandra Glass

Staff: Charles F. Morrison, *Director*
George Monroe Connie Miskis Zatek Tammy Sabina

Guests: Dave Goldberg, Controller's Office
Dr. John Thompson, Superintendent, Pittsburgh Public Schools

I. CALL TO ORDER

Chair, Pamela Golden, called the meeting to order at 3:35 p.m.

II. GUEST SPEAKER: Dr. John Thompson Superintendent, Pittsburgh Public Schools

The Commission Chair, Pamela Golden, introduced Dr. Thompson, who came to the Pittsburgh Public Schools from Tulsa, Oklahoma, about ten months ago. He was offered the position of Deputy Assistant with the Department of Education under President Clinton, but chose to stay with the Tulsa Public School system where he focused on improving the safety, accountability and technical standards for public school students and teachers.

Dr. Thompson stated that when he came to Pittsburgh, he came into a unique situation to make a difference in the community. He explained that his agenda for action includes five objectives: Accountability; the Five R's: Reading, 'Riting, 'Rithmetic, Reassurance and Relationships; Technical and Professional Development and Governance. He very briefly summarized each of these points.

Reduction in State funding has resulted in a \$36 million deficit, which has necessitated the closing and consolidation of several schools. In restructuring the remaining schools, Dr. Thompson hopes to prepare his staff to move forward toward the very real possibility of claiming the Malcolm Baldwin Award in the next 3 - 5 years. He is working to build relationships with the business community to assist in providing students with real opportunities once they have completed their education. His goal in curriculum development is "literacy plus." Dr. Thompson explained that the students

know how to read and write, but they don't have a knowledge of the process, including basic elements of human character, such as respect for others. Here, he feels the school system needs to close the gap between black and white students.

Dr. Thompson stated that up to now many teaching professionals have not been serious in their efforts for continuing education credits. They have been permitted up to six years to earn five hours of continuing education credit. At this pace, they cannot remain current and up to date with materials or clientele. Recently, the Pittsburgh School District applied for a technology grant from the State but did not succeed. Part of the reason may be that the School District has a great infrastructure that includes modern computer hardware and software in all schools.

The School District is also dealing with race and race awareness issues in Pittsburgh "that no one wants to talk about." Dr. Thompson stressed that he and his staff are working to help one child at a time and that the community must be involved in changing the governance system.

In answering questions and concerns raised by Commissioners, Dr. Thompson made the following points:

- Reduced funding means a reduction in services at all levels. Programs for students with special needs will continue, but the School District is trying to develop a new way of identifying these students. He is concerned that currently this program is lifelong and feels that guidelines should be created for students to exit such a program when their needs have been met. He has similar concerns for students deemed gifted and talented.
- Approximately \$18,000 is spent educating a special needs student. With the reduction in State and Federal funding, the community at large must step in to provide the needed support. Dr. Thompson urged Commissioners to contact the Governor's office to ask that funding levels be returned to 50%. State funding levels have been cut to 35%, meaning that the \$52 million loss must be recovered from the local government and businesses. He asked Commissioners to consider this during the next mayoral election: Who is talking about education? "Our kids need to come first."
- Everyone has a stake in education. Integration (of the schools) did not work. Kids look for the easy way out.
- Many of the city's school age children attend private schools; others move to the suburbs to avoid going to the public school. The best kids are being drawn out of the system, and then the public school gets a "bad rap."

When asked about the status of the Hands Across the Campus program, Dr. Thompson stated that the Student Advisory Council meets monthly and often identifies reasonable solutions to the problems presented. However, he felt that adults are "putting problems on the backs of babes" and taking advantage of the students. He noted that nearly 80% of all land in Oakland is not taxed and that only 40% of Downtown land is taxed. He stressed that community needs to take responsibility. The community needs to set and be good examples for the children. He stated that the kids watch TV, read the newspapers, see and hear adults dress and speak. Then the kids imitate what they see and hear. Schools are a microcosm of society. Schools need the help of parents and the community in educating children.

Dr. Thompson stated that he felt most human relations commissions across the country are defunct because the Commissioners can't take the risk; they are appointed by the mayor and tend to follow his/her lead. He also noted that opportunities for children are dwindling: the cost of attending a circus or athletic event are too exorbitant. Yet, athletes make millions of dollars each year, and nothing is said.

Dr. Thompson indicated that he would like to partner with the Commission to put an end to racism and invited the Commissioners to write to him to keep him informed of what is needed in the Pittsburgh Public School District.

III. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Commissioner Pittinger moved that the Minutes of the February Commission meeting be approved as mailed. The motion was seconded by Commissioner Barnes and carried unanimously.

IV. COMPLIANCE UPDATE

George Monroe reported that that as of February 28, 2001, 74 cases were submitted for contract credit. The FY01 contract is for the completion of 219 cases between October 1, 2000 and September 30, 2001.

V. DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Director Morrison highlighted items from the written report that was mailed to Commissioners earlier. He also reminded Commissioners that April is Fair Housing Month and asked that anyone interested in working with the Housing Committee call him.

Commissioner Golden convened a meeting with the Urban League Housing Department (ULHD) on February 23. The ULHD indicated that they had approximately 8,000 contacts during 2000 regarding questionable housing practices. Arrangements will be made with the ULHD to have appropriate referrals directed to this Commission.

March 29 (2:30 - 4:30 p.m.) has been scheduled as a mini-training session for Commissioners and new staff persons. Commissioners Broadus, McClenahan, Williams, Vallone, Golden and Barnes indicated that this date was good for them. Commissioners Samson, Hunt and Smith will not be able to attend.

VII. MISCELLANEOUS

1. Commissioner Pittinger stated that she has a number of copies of a book distributed at the Black and White Reunion, entitled "And don't call me a racist!" She offered to make copies available to Commissioners, if interested, at the next Commission meeting.
2. Dr. Barnes was appointed to the Housing Committee. Dr. Barnes indicated that while she served with the Pennsylvania Real Estate Commission's Human Relations Committee in the late 1980's she co-authored "It's Your Move," an outreach program for high school seniors to acquaint them with consumer housing information. She offered to make it available to the Commission's Housing Committee.
3. Newest staff member, Tammy Sabina (Commission Representative), was introduced to Commissioners. Two additional staff persons will begin the week of March 19: Vincent Kirk, a part-time Commission Representative; and Jeannette Hailsham, a full time Commission Representative.
4. David Engel was recently appointed to the Commission. His confirmation hearing is scheduled for March 13, 2001. The Mayor also plans to fill the final vacancy on the Commission in April.

The meeting was adjourned at 4:33 p.m.

Pittsburgh Commission on Human Relations

Directors Report

February 26, 2001

- January 31, 2001 Met with Steve Paikin, Executive Director of the Fair Housing Partnership of Greater Pittsburgh to discuss planning for fair housing month (April). Also discussed the Commission's initiatives in responding to the City of Pittsburgh's Impediments to Fair Housing Choice Analysis. Yancy Miles of the staff was also involved in this meeting.
- February 8, 2001 Met with Mark Stein and Dave Engel who are being considered by the Mayor's office for appointment to the Commission. Discussed the work of the Commission and the role of our Commissioners.
- February 11, 2001 Attended the Urban League of Pittsburgh "Urban League Sunday" program at the Carnegie Music Hall in Oakland. The program was held in conjunction with the opening of the exhibit "Africa-One Continent . . . Many Worlds."
- February 12, 2001 Met with local representatives of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development to discuss the Commission's initiatives to educate and inform consumers of their right to fair housing choice. Yancy Miles of the staff was also involved in this meeting.
- February 14, 2001 Attended the Pittsburgh Board of Public Education Inter-Agency Task Force meeting. Discussed "Operation Target," an initiative of the U.S. Department of Justice to reduce hand gun violence in our communities.
- February 14, 2001 Met with Pittsburgh school Superintendent John Thompson to discuss his planned visit to the Commission at its March meeting.
- February 15, 2001 Met with representatives of the Fair Housing Partnership of Greater Pittsburgh to review Public Service Announcements and other media tools to reach consumers with regard to fair housing issues.
- February 22, 2001 Met with Barbara Baulding, Director of the Urban League of Pittsburgh's Housing Department to discuss a collaborative approach to eliminate housing discrimination in Pittsburgh. Commissioner Golden and Yancy Miles of the staff were also in attendance at this meeting.
- February 26, 2001 Attended the program "Race in Pittsburgh" at Carnegie Mellon University.